

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A system for supporting a female urethra, comprising: an introducer needle having a first end and a second end, each said end having a flattened portion with an opening therethrough; a handle having a latch mechanism which engages the opening in the flattened portion of the first end of the introducer needle; an implant member having an end; and a connector joining the end of the implant member to the flattened portion of the second end of the introducer needle.
2. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the introducer needle is curved and symmetrical.
3. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the flattened portion of the first end differs in at least one of size and shape from the flattened end of the second portion.
4. (Original) A system according to claim 1, wherein the introducer needle has a flared section having a cross-sectional profile that, in a given direction, is at least as large as a cross-sectional profile of the connector in the given direction.

Claims 5-26 (Canceled)

27. (Original) An introducer needle for use in a surgical procedure, comprising: a central portion; a first flat spatulated section and a second flat spatulated section, said second flat spatulated section being integral with said central portion, wherein the first flat spatulated section has a tip and a constant width portion disposed between the tip and the central portion, and both said flat spatulated sections have an opening formed; and a flared section connecting the first flat spatulated section to the central portion, the flared section having a cross-sectional profile that, in a given direction, is at least as large as a cross-sectional profile of the first flat spatulated section.

28. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein said first and said second flat spatulated sections have substantially the same shape.
29. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein said tip is rounded.
30. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein the introducer needle has an asymmetric shape.
31. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein each of said spatulated sections has a tip, and the tip of the first spatulated section has a first configuration and the tip of the second spatulated section has a second configuration that is different from the first configuration.
32. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein said central portion has a circular cross section.
33. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein said central portion has an oval cross section.
34. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 27, wherein said introducer needle is arcuate.
35. (Original) An introducer needle for use in a surgical procedure, comprising: a first flat spatulated section; a straight portion connected to a distal end of said first flat spatulated section; a curved portion connected to a distal end of said straight portion; a second flat spatulated section; and a flared section connected to a distal end of said curved portion and connected, at its distal end, to the first flat spatulated section, the flared section having a cross-sectional profile that covers a cross-sectional profile of the first flat spatulated section, wherein at least one said flat spatulated section has a tip and a constant width portion disposed between the tip and the central portion, and an opening formed in that said flat spatulated section.

36. (Original) An introducer needle as in claim 35, wherein the first flat spatulated section, the flared section, the straight portion, the curved portion, and the second flat spatulated section are all integrally formed.

37. (Original) An introducer needle for use in a surgical procedure, comprising: a body portion having a proximal straight portion integral with a distal curved portion; a handle receiving the proximal end of the straight portion; and a flat spatulated section having a "T"-shaped cavity located at the distal end of the curved portion into which a filament can be introduced.

38. (Original) An introducer needle according to claim 37, wherein the handle is permanently attached to the proximal end of the straight portion.

Claims 39-41 (Canceled)

42. (Original) An introducer needle for use in a surgical procedure, comprising: a body portion having a curved portion; a flared section located at the distal end of the curved portion; and a flat spatulated section having a "T"-shaped opening located at the distal end of the flared section, a leg of the "T" extending to an edge of the flat spatulated section.

Claims 43-116 (Canceled)

117. (Currently Amended) A system for supporting a female urethra, comprising: an introducer needle having a first end and a second end having a flattened portion, said first end having a portion with an opening therethrough; a handle having a latch mechanism which engages the opening in the first end of the introducer needle; an implant member having an end; and a connector joining the end of the implant member to the flattened portion of the second end of the introducer needle, wherein the introducer needle further comprises a shrink-tubing sleeve.

118. (Currently Amended) The system according to Claim 117, wherein at least a portion of the shrink-tubing sleeve is at least one of green and blue.

119. (Currently Amended) The system according to Claim 118, wherein the shrink-tubing sleeve is blue.